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RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0290  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002949

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2017  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NO](#) [BO](#)  
SUBJECT: EVO ACCUSES AMBASSADOR OF COUP PLOTTING AND  
PARAMILITARY LINKS

REF: A. LA PAZ 2856

[1](#)B. LA PAZ 2830

Classified By: EcoPol chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d).

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) President Evo Morales used his recent trip to Italy and the Dominican Republic to level new conspiracy charges against the USG, and specifically Ambassador Goldberg. In an October 31 interview with Italian newspaper Il Manifesto de Italia, Morales accused the Ambassador of meeting with a Colombian paramilitary and collaborating with "rightest" elements in Bolivia to assist in their efforts to overthrow him and his government. Morales made similar claims during a speech in the Dominican Republic on November 4. While Evo's charges of links between the USG and opposition coup plots are outrageous and spurious, they nevertheless undermine the opposition's credibility as an independent movement. Furthermore, should violence breakout between Evo's base and opposition supporters -- a scenario which the Morales does little to discourage -- the President has established his scapegoat, the USG and the oligarchs. End Summary.

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Coup Plots and the Ambassador  
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[1](#)2. (U) In his October 31 Il Manifesto de Italia interview, Morales called the opposition "racist and fascist" and warned that the right is planning a coup d'etat. He then went on to tie the opposition with Ambassador Goldberg, mentioning the Ambassador twice by name and referring to him by title on several other occasions. He stated "In my country there exist paramilitary groups, and we have photos of the American

Ambassador with a Colombian paramilitary, taken recently here in Bolivia." Citing the Ambassador's work in the Balkans, Morales argued that Goldberg has a "long experience in convulsing (overthrowing) democratic governments."

13. (U) During a speech at Autonomous University of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic where he was given an honorary degree Morales continued to link the opposition, Ambassador Golderg, and Colombian paramilitary groups. He stated, "They (the oligarchs of the right) have formed an alliance with the U.S. Ambassador in Bolivia and with Colombian paramilitaries . . . , with the purpose of terminating a government (Morales' government) that fights for equality, solidarity, and the benefit of all Bolivians." He also argued that his government would be in power for "a long time." Evo reiterated his claim (ref A) that he would "remove U.S. bases from our soil," despite the fact that the USG has no bases in Bolivia.

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Mystery Photo  
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14. (C) Morales showed the photo of Ambassador Goldberg with the alleged Colombian paramilitary to visiting Norwegian Minister of Development Erik Solheim November 5. The Norwegian reportedly told Evo that Norway wanted the Bolivian government to patch up relations with the U.S., saying that the request reflects the views of senior Norwegian officials. Visibly angered, Evo showed Solheim the photograph, claiming that the Colombian paramilitary had smuggled arms into Bolivia and was currently in jail. Morales claimed that while he wanted good relations with the United States, the U.S. Ambassador was running around conspiring against his government. He said he would PNG the Ambassador but

complained about having to put up with an Embassy actively working against him. Evo said he would release the photo this afternoon (presumably at the Santa Cruz march).

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Comment  
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15. (C) President Morales' latest outrageous and completely spurious charges against the USG and Ambassador Goldberg raise numerous questions. Is Evo being fed misinformation from his Bolivian, Venezuelan and Cuban advisors? Is he simply trying to deflect attention away from allegations that his government is allowing the FARC to operate in Bolivia? Will Evo at some point stage or allege a failed assassination attempt against him in order to justify some form of extra-constitutional rule? Along similar lines, Morales could orchestrate a fake coup attempt -- modeled on the failed 2002 Venezuelan coup -- in which he would blame the United States as a means to consolidate his rule?

16. (C) While a fake coup or a staged assassination attempt are likely farfetched; Evo does appear to be taunting the opposition to attack him and his government with more than words in order to justify a crackdown. Morales promised to march in the opposition stronghold of Santa Cruz on November 5 in support of his new "Renta Dignidad" (pension program) that, if implemented, would seriously cut revenues to the Santa Cruz prefecture. Morales knows that his marching in Santa Cruz will infuriate opposition radicals. (Note: This follows the military's takeover of the Santa Cruz airport on October 18, which many Santa Cruz viewed as a provocation by the government, ref B. End Note). Eventually, some opposition radicals may respond with violence toward the Morales and his followers.

17. (C) Evo's steady stream of inflammatory rhetoric seems to be laying down the groundwork for blaming the United States for any violence that erupts in the country over his proposed reforms. How Morales responds to opposition and the USG should the opposition radicals respond to his provocations is the most the critical question. One thing is

certain, linking the USG to the opposition undermines the opposition's credibility, fires up Morales' base and does nothing to defuse domestic tensions. End Comment.

GOLDBERG